

Friday, March 28, 2014

Appropriations Committee and Human Services Committee Public Hearing

1915 (c) HOME & COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES WAIVER, CT ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY WAIVER
II APPLICATION

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Good morning Chairpersons and Members of the Appropriations and Human Service Committees. My name is Melinda Montovani and I work at the Brain Injury Alliance of CT (BIAC). This public testimony is in support of an amended CT Acquired Brain Injury Waiver II Application.

In 2011 there were about 3700 hospitalizations in CT for traumatic brain injury (TBI). And yet there are only 369 people being served on the current ABI Waiver program. Many others are living in institutions and or are in the community with no services and are simply told 'to wait'.

I have frequently sat in this Legislative Office Building (LOB) on issues impacting the community of brain injury survivors and their families. It has not been since March 2011 that any proposal has been made to address the ABI Waiver wait list. I testified here at the LOB on proposal, HB 5893, An Act Concerning Home and Community Based Services for Persons with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). This was to create legislation so that people who were on the wait list for two years or more could access services. At the time, it was decided that it was too costly. It was decided that it was okay for people to be waiting two or more years for services. And so people continued to do what they were told, 'to wait'.

Now it is 2014 and instead of waiting 2-3 years as they were in 2011, they are now waiting 4-5 years to access services. ABI Waiver II comes along. It is the first time in 3 years that any proposal has been drafted that would create movement on the wait list. But it does not go far enough. It is time to stop telling people to wait. It is time to open up slots that are reserved for special populations such as Money Follows the Person (MFP) and Department of Mental Health and Addiction services (DMHAS) to all individuals on the wait list. It is time to stop preferential treatment and it is time to eliminate the wait list. Not just create movement, but eliminate it. ABI Waiver II should be passed with enough slots so that everyone on the current list will be served and there should be capacity built in for those yet to apply. While we are granting access to people to services we need to be sure it is equitable. For those who have a high level of need, they should not be told to remain in an institution. For that reason, the individual cost cap needs to be increased from 150% to 200% as it is on the current ABI Waiver.

There are problems with this application just as there are problems with the current ABI waiver. Does that mean we should say 'No' to the first proposal in years that has tried to address the fact that there are families and survivors of brain injury living with NO services year after year?

I don't think so. For those families and survivors everyday without services is a lifetime. We need to take action now. Don't make them wait another lifetime. I ask you to support the ABI Waiver II application.

Thank you for your time, your consideration and your service to the residents of CT.